

B.N.K. Prasad





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HINDU RELIGIOUS
DOCTRINES

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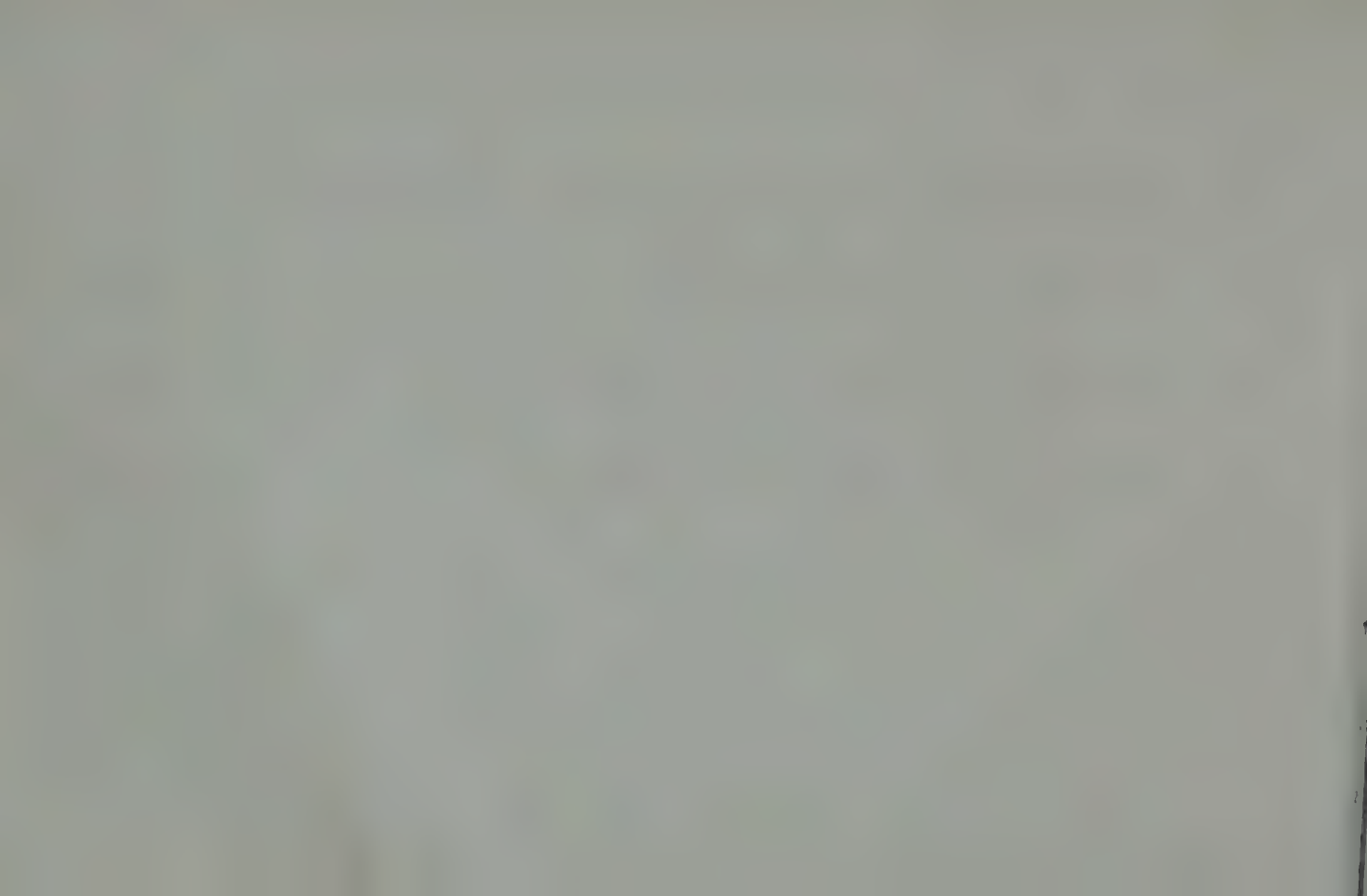
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By Hindu religious thought is meant the body of ideas, beliefs, and theories which underlie the religious emotions, activities, and institutions of the Hindus.

These religious ideas do not constitute a single and simple system of thought, for Hinduism as a religion was not founded by one prophet, nor by one incarnation of God, (In this chapter the word 'God' with capital G does not refer to any minor deity but means the Personal Being (called Isvara, Paramesvara, Paramatma, Purushottama, Mahesvara, -aguna Brahman, etc.) who is the one ultimate reality and is the creator, preserver, destroyer, and moral governor of the world. God in this sense is almost the same Being as God in Christian theology and, generally speaking, in western philosophy. There is only this difference: God in Christianity is not the destroyer of the world, and God in Hinduism is not the creator of individual selves and other eternal entities. But the relation of dependence in which the world and selves stand to God is the same in both.- E.F.S.)

nor is it derived from the teachings of any one sage. Hinduism is based on the varied religious and moral experiences and insights of many ancient, medieval, and modern Indian sages and seers, saints, devotees, and reformers, giving rise to a variety of religious ideas and practices which form the basis of different types of religious life.

Although the basic spiritual experiences are different, they are complementary, giving rise to types of religion which are not really antagonistic to one another. They are different ways of approach to the same goal, meant for different classes of people occupying different levels of spiritual development or having different tastes, aptitudes, and temperaments. Thus Hindu religious thought is a complex but unified body of many different religious theories.

Broadly speaking, there are twelve chief types of religious thought in Hinduism. All of them are orthodox in the sense that

they accept the authority of the Vedas, but not all of them are theistic in the accepted sense of the word, since some of them do not believe in God as the creator and moral governor of the world, who has a personal relation to man. There are still others which cannot be properly characterized as theistic because to all intents and purposes they really transcend theism. Hence, the chief systems of Hindu religious thought may be conveniently presented under three general heads: Atheistic, Theistic, and Supertheistic.

NON-THEISTIC SYSTEMS

Hinduism as a religion is centred not so much in the belief in God, as in faith in the reality of spirit and the spiritual order of the world. All systems of Hindu religious thought believe that the self (In Hinduism the individual self (called *atman*) is an immo-

-rial or spiritual reality which, being eternal, is not created by God. It is conceived either as pure consciousness or as essentially conscious, or as having the quality of consciousness when related to a living body. As an immaterial reality, however, it is the same as the soul in the Christian sense. In Hindu religion and Indian philosophy the words 'soul' and 'self' mean the same thing; and are used as synonyms.) of man is a spiritual reality which passes from one life to another, from the past to the present and the future, and that the history of the world is guided and governed by the moral law of karma; but there are at least two systems of religious thought in Hinduism which do not believe in God as the Supreme Person who is the creator and moral governor of the world. It is true that they lend themselves easily to a theistic interpretation, and that some of their followers have given them a theistic interpretation even though that interpretation is called in question by competent scholars. So we propose to call them nontheistic instead of atheistic or

antitheistic. These are the Sankhya and the Mimamsa Systems of reli-
giophilosophical thought. Sankhya, which means "Number" or "Num-
ber of Principles," is followed by a very limited circle; it has,
for instance, only one shrine in Bengal. Mimamsa, which means "In-
tional, Critical Study," is followed in the universities but not in the
scholastic sense as an exclusive system. We shall here consider
them separately in view of their marked differences in form and spirit.

MIMAMSA AS A NATIONALISTIC RELIGION WITHOUT GOD

The Sankhya philosophy, attributed by tradition to the Sage
Kapila, is a system of dualistic realism which is the basis of a re-
ligion without belief in God. For it, there are two ultimate reali-
ties which exist independently of each other; a plurality of selves
(*purushas*) on the one hand and infinite matter (*prakriti*) on the
other. The self, *purusha*, is pure consciousness without any activity

in it, while primal matter, prakriti, is unlimited energy and activity but has no consciousness or intelligence in it. Therefore neither of them can by itself produce the world system. The evolution of an orderly universe requires the guidance of cosmic energy by some consciousness. The process of the world's evolution is started by the contact between self, or purusha, and primal matter, or prakriti. It is through such contact that unconscious prakriti becomes, as it were, conscious and intelligent and evolves the whole world of objects, including gross physical things, the five elements, the five sense organs (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste), the five motor organs (speech, apprehension, movement, excretion, reproduction), the mind, the intellect, and the ego (the I, or ahankara).

Prakriti is made up of three subtle elements called gunas. The sattva element is of the nature of pleasure and is light and illuminating; the rajas element is of the nature of pain and is

As an example

mobile and stimulating; the third element, tamas, is of the nature of indifference and is heavy and enveloping. These three elements of prakriti enter into the constitution of all things and beings of the world in different proportions and make them different in nature and character. A man in whom the element of satva predominates tends to be bright in intellect and pure in mind; another in whom rajas predominates is always active and energetic; while a man who has a predominance of tamas in him is habitually lazy and confused in his mind.

Man is a complex being in whom we find a self to exist in intimate relation with a psychophysical organism. Although the self of a man thus stands related to a body, there is nothing in its intrinsic nature which makes it liable to birth as an embodied being in this world. In its real nature the self is the immortal spirit which is distinct from the body and the senses, and from the mind, the intellect, and the ego. It is really above the whole world of objects and transcends even prakriti -- the ultimate material ground

of the world. But because of its association with a certain body and the predominance of the elements of rajas and tamas in the constitution of that body, the self confuses itself with the body and seems to become identified with it. With this it becomes liable to all the affections and afflictions of the mind-body, and to birth and death in the world with all their attendant sorrows and sufferings. This means bondage for the self of a man -- a self that is intrinsically pure and free, immortal and immaterial.

The aim of Bhakti's religion is the liberation of man's self from bondage to the body and the material world. To help man attain this end, it recommends the path of rational discrimination between self and the material world including man's body, mind, intellect, and the ego. The root cause of man's bondage being the false identification of his self with the body, what is absolutely necessary for liberation is the light of true know-

-ledge about the self. It is not faith in and worship of God that is to save man's self from the ills and evils of its present existence. We cannot strictly prove the existence of God as the creator of the world and the savior of man's self. It is man himself who is responsible for his bondage because it is his ignorance about the reality of the self that has caused it. So it lies in man's power to liberate himself by means of a penetrating insight into, and a clear realization of, the nature of his self.

For common sense, the self of a man is his body with the quality or function of consciousness. So also some philosophers hold that the mind, as a series of conscious states, or the ego, as the knower of things and the doer of actions, is the self. But for the Sankhya, body, mind, and the ego are all products of unconscious matter or prakriti, and are themselves unconscious. They become apparently conscious and intelligent when the light of the self's consciousness is reflected in them. We are apt to take the reflect-

-ion of the self in these objects as the self itself and so speak of the body, the mind, or the ego as the self, just as one is apt to think of the reflection of the moon on the dancing waves as moving when it is the water that moves, not the moon. It is sheer ignorance to think that the self is identical with the mind-body or the ego. They are all objects of consciousness and so distinct from and other than the self which is consciousness itself.

If by such rational and critical study of experience we can discriminate the self from all that is not-self, we shall attain to the knowledge that the self is a hyperphysical, transcendent reality which is above body and mind and above birth and death, sin and suffering. This saving knowledge has to be attained through control of the passions, purification of the body and mind, and the practice of meditation and concentration. These will be elaborated in the discussion of the Yoga System. But it should be noted here that this knowledge is not mere intellectual

understanding of the truth about the self as something distinct from the body and mind. It is a direct experience and clear realization of the truth that the self is the unborn and undying spirit which is above the mind-body complex and the individual ego. For the Jankhya, it is a clear and steady vision of this truth that dispels the gloom of ignorance and liberates the self of man once for all.

In conclusion it should be noted that some interpreters of the Jankhya give a theistic form to the system. They hold that the existence of God as possessor of creative activity cannot be admitted, for there can be no activity in the self. Yet we must believe in God as the eternally perfect spirit who is the witness of the world and who by His mere presence moves and guides prakriti to act and evolve the world. He is the unmoved mover of the world and the unaffected, eternal witness of the world panorama.

MIMANSA AS A RELIGION OF RITUALISM

The Mimamsa philosophy, founded by Jaimini, is one of the orthodox systems which is directly based on the Vedas and emphasizes their ritualistic aspect. It builds up a system of thought to justify and help the continuation of the Vedic rites and rituals. The Vedas are valued by the Mimamsa, not because they are the work of God or of any person, but because they are the impersonal source of commandments to perform the sacrificial rites. It even holds that the sole use of the Vedas lies in directing rituals and that if any part of them does not contain such direction but gives information about the existence of anything it is useless, unless it can be shown that it is indirectly connected with some sacrament. The Mimamsa philosophy may thus be called ritualistic pragmatism, for according to it Vedic knowledge is valuable for ritualistic activity.

The Mimamsa metaphysics is pluralistic realist. It believes in the reality of many independent things and beings in the world. For it, reality is a complex whole made up of such entities as physical things, atoms, selves, heaven, hell, and the deities to whom sacrifices are to be performed according to the Vedic injunctions. The world of nature is composed of living bodies wherein the self reaps the consequences of its past deeds, of the sensory and motor organs which are the instruments of feeling these consequences, and of the objects of sense perception which constitute the fruits to be enjoyed or suffered. The selves are permanent, eternal substances, and so also are the material elements of which the physical world is composed. The formation of the world is due to the operation of the law of karma. No necessity is felt for admitting the existence of God to explain the origin of the world. The law of karma is autonomous and it independently regulates the atoms to form just that kind of world in which the self may reap the moral consequences of all its past actions.

The self is an eternal, infinite substance which is conscious and is related to a real body in a real world. But consciousness is not the essence of the self. It is an adventitious quality which the self acquires when it is related to a mind and the mind is related to external objects through the senses. The self does not die with the body, but passes from one body to another to be able to reap the fruits of its past actions. All the deeds done by a man generate in his self a certain unperceived potency which persists even when the actions have ceased, and produces their fruits at the proper time and place. This is how a sacrifice performed here and now will bear fruit after a long time (say, after this life, in heaven). There are as many selves as there are individuals. It is ignorance that makes the self liable to birth and death, that is, bondage to the world through the body. But every self can attain liberation by means of knowledge and the performance of obligatory duties in the right spirit.

According to the Hindus, religion, or dharma, consists in the performance of the sacrificial rites enjoined by the eternal Vedas, not in the belief in and worship of God. In its anxiety to secure the supreme place for the Vedas, the Hinduism could not believe in God, lest He should become superior or at least equal in authority to the Vedas. The Vedas embody not so much eternal truths as eternal injunctions or laws which enjoin the performance of rites and rituals. They supply the standard of moral judgment as to what is right and what is wrong. Morality and religion both consist of obedience to the Vedic commandments.

In the Vedic Age sacrifices performed by the Vedic seers and their descendants were meant to please different deities in order to win some favour or avert some ill. But the Hinduism is so much interested in the ceremonial details of the rituals as to forget the gods who gradually recede and fade into mere grammatical designations. They are no longer looked upon as living spirits but merely as objects of the act of offering oblations at a sacrifice. The primary

object of performing a sacrifice is not to please God or gods. Nor is it purification of the self or moral improvement. Rituals are to be performed just because the Vedas command us to perform them. It is true that some of these rituals are to be performed in order to enjoy heaven in a future life or to obtain worldly benefits in this life, but there are some of them which must be performed daily or occasionally simply because they are enjoined by the Vedas. There the Mimamsa religion reaches, through a thoroughgoing ritualism, the noble conception of "duty for duty's sake," without any ulterior motive.

In the early Mimamsa, the highest goal of human life and activity appears to have been the attainment of heaven or a state in which there is unalloyed happiness. Life in heaven is regarded as the usual end of the performance of rituals in strict accordance with the Vedic injunctions. Gradually, however, the followers of Mimamsa realized that the performance of actions, good or bad, if directed by the desire for enjoyment of objects, causes

rebirth and consequent misery. So instead of heaven, liberation is taken in the later Vinaya as the highest end of religion.

When a man understands that worldly pleasures are more or less mingled with pain, he ceases to run after them, tries to control his passions, and desists from forbidden actions, as well as actions with motives of future enjoyment. Thus being free from all passions and desires which impel life from one state to another, the chance of his future birth and bondage is removed. By the disinterested performance of obligatory duties and knowledge of the self, all the effects of his past actions are also worn out and exhausted. After this life such a person, being free from all the bonds that bind the self to the world, is never born again. He is thus liberated from birth and death, and from all sin and suffering.

The state of liberation, according to the later Vinaya as also for the Sankhya, is not a state of happiness or bliss, but only

one of complete cessation of painful experience. The liberated self, being dissociated from the body and the senses, cannot have any consciousness. As such, it can have no experience, either of pleasure or of pain. So liberation is a state in which the self abides in its intrinsic nature as pure substance beyond the reach of pleasure and pain.

In modern times the Mimamsa religion has undergone considerable change in the Hindu society. It is no longer followed as a self-complete and self-sufficient religious path. The Vedic ceremonies and sacrifices, which continue to be performed in different parts of India in varying scales, are performed, not for their own sake, but for the propitiation of gods and goddesses or of the Supreme God. The Vedic faith in the living presence of God or the deities in the place of worship, which was lost in the heyday of Mimamsa thought, seems to be now revived and to form an important part of the Mimamsa religion.

THEISTIC SCHOOLS

Many of the Hindu systems of thought are theistic in the sense that they believe in a personal God who has created a real world of things and beings, and who has moral relations with mankind. But we do not find the same type of theism in all of them. Thus, while some orthodox systems of Hinduism combine the theistic faith with a pluralistic view of the universe, one of them at least is professedly dualistic and some others are obviously monistic. Hence we have three types of theism in Hinduism; pluralistic, dualistic, and monistic. We shall now consider them one by one.

PLURALISTIC TYPE -- THE NYAYA-VAISHESHKA THEORY

In Indian theism the idea of God's creation of the world out of nothing is absent. Here it is believed either that God created the

world out of Himself or that He created it out of pre-existing materials. Some systems of Hindu religious thought hold that there are many such uncreated and independent things and beings out of which God formed and fashioned the world system. While God is one, the ultimate realities of the world are many. Thus these systems combine a pluralistic view of reality with a theistic faith in One God. As such, they may be characterized as pluralistic theism. This type of theism is represented by the Nyaya, Vaishishika, and Yoga systems of Hindu thought. Of these, the Nyaya and the Vaishishika are allied systems and will here be considered together.

Nyaya, which may be translated as "theory of inference," or that which "leads from premise to conclusion," is not followed today as a school of religious practices, but more as a system of logic. Vaishishika, which means "study of ultimate particulars," is accepted more as a cosmological system than as a religious system complete in itself.

The Nyaya-Vaiseshika philosophy, like many of the other Indian systems, aims at the liberation of the individual self from bondage through a right knowledge of reality. According to it, reality is a complex system of many independent and eternal entities like the four kinds of atoms of earth, water, fire and air, and like ether, space, time, minds, and selves. There are two kinds of selves, the Supreme Self which is the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the world, and individual selves which are different in different bodies and quite distinct from the body and the mind.

God and the World

God as the Infinite Self cannot, of course, be perceived by our senses but His existence is known through a number of rational arguments. There is first the cosmological argument. The world, as we know it, is a series of things and events, each of which is caused by certain antecedent conditions. Just as any part of the

world, so the world as a whole is of the nature of an effect and, therefore, requires a cause to explain its origin and continued existence. Neither matter nor individual selves can be the ultimate or the first cause of the world. A cause must be a conscious and an intelligent power that can select and combine the necessary materials for the production of a definite effect. Since the effect here is the infinite universe, the first cause thereof must be an infinitely wise and powerful being. That is, He must be God, and none but God.

Second, we have the moral argument. That there is a moral order of the world, or that there is any morality in the world, implies that the joys and sorrows of our life are in accordance with our moral deserts. This merit and demerit of our actions brings about the happy and unhappy experiences which we have in our lives. The stock of merit and demerit accruing from our good and bad actions is an unseen power which accounts for the differences in our lot in this world; but the stock of moral deserts,

being unconscious and unintelligent, cannot lead to the proper moral consequences without the guidance of some intelligent being. The individual selves who are governed by this moral law cannot be expected to govern and control it. Hence there must be a supremely wise and intelligent person under whose guidance the moral law operates and makes proper moral adjustments. This person is the Supreme Being, God, the moral governor of the world.

Third, we have the argument from the authoritativeness of the Vedas. According to some Nyaya-Vaiseshikas, the authority of the Vedas is derived from the supreme authority of their author, just as the authoritativeness of the sciences is derived from the scientists who founded them. No human being can be the author of the Vedas, for the supersensible realities and principles related in the Vedas cannot be objects of the knowledge of any ordinary individual. Hence the author of the Vedas must be God, the Supreme Person who has a direct knowledge of all objects, past, present, and future; finite, infinite, and infinitesimal; sensible and supersensible.

Last, the testimony of the scriptures also proves the existence of God, the Supreme Being. The Hindu scriptures, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, bear unmistakable testimony to the reality of God. Scriptural testimony is the best evidence for the belief in supernatural realities like God, soul, and immortality, for these can neither be perceived by our senses nor convincingly proved by any argument based on sense experience. They are to be apprehended through some sort of supersensuous, spiritual experiences. The scriptures embody the direct spiritual experiences of saints, sages, and seers relating to moral, religious, and spiritual matters. We cannot reasonably doubt their honesty and the veracity of their statements. As such, the scriptures constitute a valid source of our belief in the existence of God.

God is the eternal and infinite spirit who is not limited by this world of nature and individual selves, since it is related to

Him as a body to the self which resides in it. He possesses to the full all perfections and is omnipotent, omniscient, majestic, all-glorious, infinitely beautiful and wise, and perfectly free from attachment. God is the Supreme Self, the eternal, infinite self who first creates, then maintains, and finally destroys the world.

The creation of the world means the ordering of the eternal entities of atoms, space, time, ether, mind, and individual selves which co-exist with God, into a moral system in which individual selves enjoy and suffer the consequences of their actions and all physical objects serve as means to the moral and spiritual ends of our lives. Since the process of creation always has reference to the stock of merit or demerit acquired by individual selves in a previous world, the process of creation and destruction is beginningless and we cannot speak of a first creation of the world. When God wills to create a world, by His mere thought there appears the embryo of a world out of the atoms of fire and earth. God animates that vast embryo with the World Soul (Brahma) who is entrusted with

the work of creation in its concrete details and with proper adjustment between virtue and happiness, vice and misery.

also

God is/the moral governor of the world of living beings, including ourselves. Like a wise and benevolent father He directs all human beings to do such actions and experience such consequences as are consistent with their past conduct. Man is not absolutely free in his actions, rather he is relatively free and has to act under the guidance of the Divine Being who dispenses the fruits of his actions and is the supreme arbiter of his joys and sorrows. The order of the world is, on the whole, a moral order in which the life and destiny of all individual selves are governed both by physical laws and by the moral law of karma which ensures that every man must have his just dues according to his deserts.

The created world runs its course for many years, but it can-

-not exist for all time to come. Creation is followed by the destruction of the world. The periods of creation and destruction of of world system make one complete cycle (called a kalpa) which has been repeating itself eternally. The theory of cycles or recurring periods of creation and destruction is accepted by all systems of Hindu religious thought. When in the course of time the World Soul, Brahma, gives up his body like other selves, there arises in the Divine Being the will to destroy the world. Then the creative function of the unseen moral deserts of individual selves ceases and they begin to operate for the dissolution and destruction of the world. When the dissolution is complete, the eternal entities of ether, space, time, minds, and selves with their stocks of merit and demerit continue to exist, but are at rest until God wills to create afresh.

The Individual Self and Its Liberation

In the Nyaya-Vaisheshika philosophy, the self is a unique,

eternal, infinite, and indestructible substance because it is not limited to time, space, and causality. The self is different and distinct from the body, the senses, the mind, and the stream of consciousness. The body being by itself unconscious and unintelligent cannot take the place of the self. The senses cannot explain the functions of memory, imagination, and thinking, which belong to self. The mind is, according to the Nyaya-Vaisesika, an atomic substance and an internal sense. If it were the self and the qualities of pleasure and pain belonged to it, we could not have any internal perception of them, for they would be as imperceptible as an atom. We must admit that the self is a reality which is distinct from the body, mind, and the senses. It is a conscious substance and not, as the Advaita Vedanta holds, of the stuff or essence of consciousness.

Although consciousness belongs to the self as an attribute, it is not an essential and inseparable attribute of it. The self has the quality of consciousness when it is related to the mind, and

the mind is related to the senses, and the senses come in contact with external objects. Otherwise, there would be no consciousness in the self.

For the individual self the highest good of life is liberation from bondage to the flesh, a state of complete and absolute cessation of all pain and misery. So long as the self is associated with a body it is impossible for it to be completely free from pain because the sense organs of the body cannot possibly avoid contact with unpleasant objects. Hence liberation is to be attained through complete dissociation of the self from the body. This happens when the self gives up its present body at death and there is no chance of its being born in any other body. The Nyaya-Vaiseshika thus does not admit the possibility of man's attaining liberation in this life and in this world.

With the end of all connection with the body, the liberated self ceases to have painful or pleasurable experiences, nay more,

it ceases to have any experiences or consciousness at all. It exists as a pure substance which has no experience or consciousness of anything. Liberation is thus a negative state of freedom from pain and not a positive experience of bliss or happiness. It is the condition of unobstructed peace and act of supreme bliss as it is conceived to be in the Vedanta.

To attain liberation one must realize the self as transcend-ent reality which is distinct from the mind and the body. For this purpose a man should first receive scriptural instructions about the self. Then he should reflect on them and firmly establish the knowledge of the self by means of reasoning. Finally, he must meditate on the self in conformity with the methods of yoga practice. With the realization of the self in this way, all wrong notions about it are removed and he ceases to think of himself as the body or the mind. Such a man is no longer moved to action by the base passions and propensities of his animal nature, nor is he affected by other actions which are done

by him with no desire for fruits. All his past deeds being exhausted by producing their proper consequences in this life, the individual has to undergo no more birth in this world. The stopping of rebirth means the final cessation of the self's connection with the body and, therefore, of all pain and suffering. And this is liberation -- the highest end of man's life.

GENERALIZING THESIS - YOGA AS A SYSTEM OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Yoga as a philosophy combines the dualistic realism of the Sankhya with a theistic faith in God. It accepts most of the metaphysics of the Sankhya with its theory of a plurality of selves (parusha) on the one hand, and unconscious primal matter (prakriti) and its products on the other. God is the perfect spirit who is eternal, all-pervading, omnipotent, and omniscient. He is complete-

-ly and eternally free from all actions and afflictions, and their effects and impressions. As such, He is distinguished from all other selves.

It is a highly controversial question among contemporary philosophers as to the way in which God brings about the association or dissociation between purusha and prakriti. One school holds that God merely removes all obstacles to the free working of the purposes of prakriti. More consistent with the theistic position of Yoga philosophy is the statement that God as the Supreme Self brings about the association or dissociation between purusha and prakriti in so far as the moral deserts of individual selves require the evolution or dissolution of the world. Purusha and prakriti being independent realities, they are not naturally associated with nor dissociated from each other. It is God who effects their association and dissociation for the creation and destruction of the world.

The special interest of Yoga as a religion is in the method of concentration (yoga), which is considered by it to be the sure means of attaining liberation. The individual self is in bondage so long as it confuses itself with the body, the mind, and the ego. In truth, the self is pure and eternal consciousness which is distinct from the whole world of objects including the mind, the intellect, and the ego. To realize this truth a man must restrain all bodily and mental functions and yet have that pure consciousness which is the self itself. This will convince him of the reality of the self as the transcendent spirit. When he has a clear and steady realization of the self as such, he becomes free from all affections and afflictions of the body and the mind. That is, he is liberated from sin and suffering, from birth and death.

Yoga as religion is a practical method of attaining liberation through self-realization. The word yoga means the cessation of all mental reactions or modifications. The aim of yoga is to prevent the self from identifying itself with mental modifications, but

this is not possible so long as the mental modifications are there and the self has not realized its distinction from them all. Hence some way of effecting the cessation of all mental modifications is necessary in order that the self may abide in itself as pure, self-shining consciousness. This is accomplished by the eight steps in the practice of yoga which are generally accepted by all schools of religious thought in Hinduism.

1. It is almost a truism to say that a man cannot realize spiritual truths so long as his mind is tainted with impurities and his intellect is vitiated by evil thoughts. Hence the first step in the practice of yoga is self-restraint or self-control, which is gained through (a) abstention from injury to any life, (b) truthfulness in thought, word, and deed, (c) nonstealing, (d) continence, and (e) nonacceptance of unnecessary gifts from other persons.

2. The second step in yoga is self-culture in order that the

spiritual aspirant may cultivate good habits which will purify him. It consists in (a) purification of the body by washing, taking pure food, and similar practices; and purification of the mind by cultivating good sentiments and noble attitudes; (b) contentment; (c) penance and austerity; (d) study of sacred books; and (e) constant contemplation of God.

3. The next step is the adoption of suitable and steady postures for meditation. There are various postures of the body described in the Yoga system, all of which can be properly learned only under the guidance of experts. Of these, the lotus posture is most popular. In it one must sit erect with the left foot turned up and placed upon the right thigh and the right foot similarly placed on the left thigh, and with the two hands placed upon their respective knees, the thumb and the index finger touching each other at their ends. These postures are necessary for the health of the body and the concentration of the mind. They are effective ways by which the body can be kept partially free from diseases and all the limbs can

be brought under control and prevented from producing disturbances in the mind.

4. Then come certain breathing exercises which conduce to steadiness of the body and the mind. These consist in deep inspiration, retention of breath, and expiration with measured durations in the proportions of one to four and four to two time units respectively. The practice of breath control enables one to suspend breathing for a long time and thereby prolong the state of concentration, but the details of the process must be learned from experts.

5. The fifth discipline consists in restraint of the senses. Here one is to turn his senses from distracting sights and sounds, and make them follow the lead of the mind itself. It requires strong determination and long practice to control one's senses with success; but when a man gains mastery over his senses in this way, he rises above the ordinary distractions of life and can concentrate his mind steadily on the proper objects.

6. The next stage is steady attention to a desired object. It consists in fixing the mind and holding it on some desired object like the midpoint between the eyebrows, the images of gods, or the moon. The ability to keep one's attention steadily fixed on some object is the test of fitness for entering into the next higher stage of yoga.

7. The next step is meditation on the object of attention. It is just the even and continuous flow of thought all around the object of attention. When sufficiently prolonged, meditation enables the mind to penetrate into the object of thought and grasp its reality. Thus meditation reveals the reality of the contemplated object to the mind of one who is well advanced on the path of yoga.

8. The last stage in the practice of yoga is perfect concentration of the mind on the object of attention and meditation (samadhi). In it the mind is so deeply absorbed in the object that it loses itself in it and has no awareness of itself. At the preceding stage

of meditation the act and the object of thought remain distinct. But here the act of meditation is not separately known; it takes on the form of the object and loses itself, as it were. So here, only the object of thought remains shining in the mind, and one does not even know that there is a process of thought in the mind. This state of perfectly concentrated thought is known as the trance of meditation, or as conscious concentration, in so far as there is in it a distinct consciousness of the object of meditation.

A spiritual aspirant should practice yoga with its eightfold disciplines for a sufficiently long time and with a sufficiently determined will. He is then in a position to attain yoga perfectly, to attain cessation of all mental modifications. This is the trance of perfect absorption in which, all mental modifications being restrained, nothing is known or thought of by the mind. Yet it is not a state of unconsciousness. Rather, it is that super-conscious state of concentration in which all mental states and

appearances of objects are negated, and there are no ripples in the placid surface of the mind. In this state the self abides in its own essence as pure consciousness, enjoying the still vision of self-shining existence.

He who realizes the self as this transphysical and supermental reality, as the transcendent spirit, rises above the whole world of objects and ceases to be affected and afflicted by the ordinary joys and sorrows of life. With this he reaches the final goal of life, liberation from all pain and suffering.

THE DUALISTIC THEM OF MADHVA
(DVAITA)

Madhvecharya was a Vaishnava thinker who lived in South India in the thirteenth century and developed a system of dualistic theism

out of the teachings of the Upanishads and the Vedanta. For him, there are two ultimate categories of reality, the absolute which is independent of everything else, and the relative which is completely dependent on the absolute. God, or Brahman, is the Absolute Reality and is the same as Lord Vishnu. Individual selves and material objects are all relative realities, dependent on God. They are absolutely distinct and different from one another. The differences between them are of five kinds, of which each is absolute. These differences are between God and selves, God and material objects, one individual self and another, selves and material objects, and one material object and another. Krishna's religious thought thus combines dualism with theism and is a system of dualistic theism. (Ivate - "philosophy of the two.") There are many followers of Krishna in India today, especially in the South.

God And The World

God is the Supreme Person who is called Narayana, Vishnu, Hari, and many other names. We cannot know Him through our unaided thought and reason. The belief in God must be based on the teachings of the scriptures, all of which aim at revealing the existence and nature of God. From them we know that God is the absolutely independent Being who is free from all imperfections, and possesses all good and glorious qualities in unlimited extent. He is of the essence of self-revealing consciousness and bliss, and has such attributes as infinite power and infinite mercy. Brahman or God is existence-consciousness-bliss (sat-chit-ananda) incarnate and as such lives in His heavenly abode with His consort, Lakshmi, who is the personification of His power. He manifests Himself in various forms and through all the incarnations (avatars) in the world.

He is the Lord of all things and the creator, preserver, and destroyer of all things. He is the highest of all, since there is

nothing like Him nor greater than He in the universe. It is He who controls all things, gives us the light of all knowledge, and also obscures it at times. It is He who leads us from life to life in bondage and it is He who helps us attain final deliverance. He is the Lord even of the gods and the sole ruling and controlling power of the universe.

God creates the world, not out of Himself, but out of the primal matter called prakriti which is an eternal and unconscious substance. God is not the material cause of the world, He is only its efficient cause. It is under His control and guidance that prakriti, the material cause, evolves the world of physical objects. The order of evolution of the world is such the same as in the Sankhya, but here the three gunas of sattva, rajas, and tamas are not regarded as the constituents of prakriti; they are its first products or evolutions.

Prakriti is not anything unreal and illusory like maya. It

is a real and an eternal entity which is the object of God's knowledge and creative activity. God Himself maintains the reality of the material world and its absolute distinction from Him, but God so controls and guides prakriti from within that it evolves into an orderly world in which individual selves may live and act and realize their moral destiny. Thus God is not outside the world, although He is quite different from it and is not embodied in it. Being eternally perfect, He has no end or His own which He wants to realize through the world's evolution. The history of the world is the revelation of God's perfection and of man's progressive self-realization.

Individual Selves and Their Liberation

Individual selves are finite and eternal entities, and also conscious and active subjects. They are infinitely small, infinite in number, and fundamentally different from one another. Selves are

neither created by God nor do they form the body of God, but they are absolutely dependent on Him. Each individual self has its own imperfections, such as ignorance and suffering; although they are different from God, they possess in limited degree the qualities of knowledge and bliss in common with God. Such resemblance, however, does not mean identity of essence between God and the individual self, for the self which is always dependent on God can never be identical with Him. Just as a servant cannot be identical with his master, so the individual self can never be identical with God. It is sheer ignorance and folly to think that the finite self is ever identical with God who is the infinite and absolute self.

Even when the individual self is liberated, it does not become identical with the essence of God. The liberated self closely approximates and resembles God in the qualities of knowledge and bliss; it becomes similar, but not identical. Even in the state of liberation, the individual self's knowledge and bliss are

finite and limited as compared with those of God which are infinite and unlimited. The knowledge and bliss attained by individual selves are in each case appropriate to their intrinsic merits, so that the distinction between one self and another is maintained even in the state of liberation.

There are three classes of selves, of which the first includes those that are always free, the second includes those that were once in bondage but are now liberated, and the third includes those that are still in bondage. Of the selves in bondage, those who are pure in nature, with sattva predominating, will be liberated; those who are of an intensely passionate temperament, with rajas predominating, will always wander from life to life in this world; and those who are grossly vicious in their nature, with tamas predominating, are doomed permanently to a miserable life in hell.

For an individual self liberation from bondage to the world (moksha) is the highest end of life. While such other ends of life

as wealth and enjoyment are temporal, liberation is eternal and imperishable. The root cause of man's bondage is ignorance about his self and Brahman, so the first step in the attainment of liberation is the acquisition of true knowledge about Brahman and the self. A man should know that God is the omniscient, omnipotent, and all-merciful ruler of the world. He must have a clear realization of the Lord's infinite and unparalleled greatness and goodness. He should always think of himself as completely dependent on the Lord and never as identical with Him. It is the constant consciousness of his dependence on, and not the false notion of identity with, Brahman that can save man's self and liberate him from bondage.

The lodge of the truth about God and the self is not, however, a sufficient condition of salvation. There can be no liberation for man without the grace of the Lord. What is, therefore, more important than knowledge is man's sincere devotion to and pure love of the Lord. To develop and maintain this essential religious

attitude, a man ought to keep himself constantly engaged in the service and worship of God. He should devote his body and mind, his thought and speech to the cause of goodness and truth, and to the study of the holy scriptures. All this pleases God most, for God Himself is truth and goodness. Being thus pleased, God gives His grace to the man who loves Him as his dearest. Just with this does the man stand liberated from all bonds which bind the soul to the world. He leaves this body and this world at death, and lives for ever in the presence of God, enjoying the eternal bliss of communion with Him.

MONISTIC THEORY

THE QUALIFIED MONISM OF RAMANUJA
(VISISTHADVAITA)

Ramanuja, who lived about two centuries before Madhva, was also a Vaishnava philosopher who attempted to synthesize Vaishnavism with the Vedanta, but he developed a monistic system of religious thought out of it. He favoured neither the dualistic philosophy

which was later taught by Madhva nor the unqualified monism which Sankara had taught two centuries earlier. For him, Brahman or God is not absolutely different from the individual self and the material world as the dualists believed, nor is He absolutely and unqualifiedly identical with the self as the followers of Sankara believe. Rather, Ramanuja said that Brahman as Absolute is really embodied in the self and the world, and there is identity between Brahman as absolute and Brahman as embodied. Brahman is the only absolute and independent reality which pervades the whole world. Material objects and individual selves are not independent realities, but are grounded in and dependent on Brahman, the Supreme Being. They are organically related to the Supreme Being and form the body of the Lord. Brahman is, therefore, not an unqualified and indeterminate reality, but a determinate and qualified being. He is both the independent, absolute reality and the embodied self of the world. Since Ramanuja thus admits the identity of Brahman as qualified by two different forms or characters, his system is called qualified monism (Visishtadvaita - "one ultimate as quali-

-fied")- There are many followers of this position today, more than of the dualistic school of Advaita, and both in northern and southern India.

Brahman and the World

Brahman, according to Ramanuja, is the absolute reality which includes within itself matter and finite spirits as its integral parts. He is the only reality in the sense that there is nothing outside or independent of Him, nothing either similar or dissimilar to Him. Brahman is thus free from all external distinctions between Himself and anything outside which is like or unlike Him. But Brahman possesses internal distinctions in so far as there are within Him conscious selves and unconscious matter which can be mutually distinguished. God as absolute contains within Himself material objects as well as finite selves as His internal parts or qualify-

-ing attributes. The Absolute One thus contains the many and is qualified by the many. Ramanuja's Brahman is not a distinctionless unity which excludes plurality. Rather, He is a unity qualified by the many. This is another reason why His system is known as qualified monism.

Brahman is possessed of an infinite number of infinitely good qualities such as omnipotence, omniscience, benevolence. Therefore, Brahman is not qualityless, but is possessed of qualities. He does not, however, possess any bad or immoral quality. He creates, maintains, and withdraws the world, according to the moral exigencies of individual selves. The world is a real creation of Brahman out of eternal matter which exists within Him. Matter is the source of all material objects and as such is called *prakriti* or the material ground of the world. As in the Sankhya, so here, *prakriti* is regarded as an unconscious and uncreated reality. But unlike the Sankhya, Ramanuja holds that it is a part of Brahman and controlled by Him, just

as the human body is controlled from within by the human self.

During the state of dissolution, matter remains in Brahman in a latent, subtle, and undifferentiated form. Brahman creates the world of diverse out of subtle matter in accordance with the deeds (karma) of the selves in a previous world. It is Brahman's wonderful creative power that impels matter to evolve the world of objects. Matter is first transformed into the three subtle elements of fire, water, and earth. Gradually, the subtle elements become mixed up in different proportions and produce all gross objects which we perceive in the material world. The creation of the world is a real fact and not an illusory appearance, as Sankara would say. The created world is as real as Brahman but it is dependent on Brahman and cannot exist apart from Him.

Brahman is sometimes described as the wielder of a magical power (maya), not because the world is unreal and illusory like a magical show, but because His power of creation is as wonderful as

that of a magician. Ishaṇuḥ, therefore, holds that creation is a real act of Brahman, the Supreme Being, and that the world exists in and is controlled by Him. The Supreme Being is the immanent principle of the world as well as of selves. They are sustained and controlled by Him, and entirely subserve His purposes. Brahman with the world and individual selves is an organic whole. He is the Supreme Person who is at the same time transcendent to and immanent in the world and individual selves.

The Self And Its Bondage And Liberation

By the self Ishaṇuḥ means the embodied self. The self, which exists eternally, is infinitely small and therefore is capable of penetrating into every material substance. It is not made, but it has a real body which is made of matter; like matter,

the self is a part of Brahman and so cannot be infinite. Consciousness is not an accidental quality of the self, dependent on its connection with the body. It is an essential quality of the self and it remains under all conditions. In deep sleep and even in the state of liberation, when the self is altogether disembodied, the self remains conscious of itself as "I am." The self is, therefore, identified by Ramanuja with what we mean by the word I or ego.

The relation between the individual self and Brahman is one of identity as well as difference. It is unthinkable that the self which is finite can be identical with Brahman in every respect. But at the same time the self cannot be totally different from Brahman, since it is a part of Him and is pervaded by Him. Brahman is the inner controller of all selves and all material objects. Hence between the self and Brahman there is identity as between a part and the whole, or between a quality and its substance. But it is not an unqualified or absolute identity between exactly identical terms, which is a meaningless tautology. It is an identity between two

different forms of the same reality. A man is considered to remain the same person in his youth and old age. ~~The identity of the man~~ the identity of the man means the identity of his self in two different forms or bodily conditions. Similarly, the identity of the self with Brahman means identity between two different forms of the same reality, namely, Brahman as the creator of the universe and as existing in the form of man. It is, therefore, an identity qualified by difference, which is another reason for calling Ramanuja's philosophy qualified realism.

Bondage of the self to the body is due to ignorance, which consists in the identification of the self with the body. As the effect of such ignorance, the self thinks of itself as the body and seems to enjoy pleasure or suffer pain as the body does. Ignorance is thus the egoism in man which leads him to identify the self with the not-self, and enjoy or suffer in life accordingly.

Liberation from bondage must be sought through religious work and philosophical knowledge. A man should perform the different obligatory rites enjoined by the Vedas according to his caste and station in life. These should be performed all his life as obligations without any desire for a reward, such as heaven. Disinterested performance of such duties destroys the accumulated effects of the past deeds which stand in the way of knowledge. Then, a man should study the Mimamsa philosophy and thereby realize that the sacrificial rites cannot lead to any permanent good and cannot help him attain salvation. This persuades him to the study of the Vedanta. From the Vedanta he learns that Brahman is the almighty creator, sustainer, and controller of all things and beings, and that his self is not identical with the body, but is really a part of Brahman who controls it from within. He learns also that liberation can be attained, not by mere "study and reasoning," but only if Brahman is pleased to choose him for liberation.

The knowledge imparted by the Vedanta is not mere verbal know-

-ledge of the scriptural texts. It is that real knowledge which consists in a steady, constant remembrance of Brahman, the Supreme Self. This is variously described as meditation, prayer, and devotion. Constant meditation on the Supreme Self as the dearest object of love should be practiced, along with the performance of the obligatory rituals. Intense remembrance of Brahman, or devotion thus practiced, ultimately matures into an immediate knowledge or direct experience of Brahman. This, therefore, is the final means of liberation. This brings about the destruction of all ignorance and effects of past deeds (karma) by which the self is bound to the body. Therefore, the self which realizes Brahman is liberated from the body for ever, without any chance of rebirth.

We should remember, however, that liberation cannot be attained simply by human efforts. Brahman, the Supreme Being, pleased by devotion and complete self-surrender, helps the devotee to attain perfect knowledge by removing obstacles. He gives His

grace and lifts from bondage the man who flings himself at the mercy of the Supreme Being and constantly remembers Him as the only object of love. Absolute self-surrender to God, coupled with complete faith in His mercy and power, is sometimes regarded by Ramana as alone sufficient to lead at once to liberation.

Liberation does not mean the self's identification with Brahman. Even when liberated, the self does not become identical with Brahman, but remains distinct from Him. The liberated self having pure consciousness, untainted by any imperfection, becomes, in this respect, similar to Brahman. Free from ignorance and bondage of every kind, it enjoys the bliss of complete communion with Brahman.

RELIGIOUS TEACHING OF THE SAIVAS

Saivism is a popular school of religion within the fold of

Hinduism. Although it is a sectarian school, it does not depart from the dominant monistic trend of Hindu religious and philosophical thought. Each of the two main systems of religious thought in Saivism is theistic in the sense that it admits a personal God, and also is monistic in so far as it holds that God is the only Ultimate Reality and that other realities are in some sense or other identical with God or God's creative power. The Siddhanta school of Saiva philosophy has flourished in southern India and has many followers today (Siddhanta - "established doctrines"). The other school of Saiva philosophy flourished in Kashmir in northern India and is sometimes called the Kashmir school of Saivism; as a separate school it has a limited number of followers today. It is known as the Pratyabhijna (recognition) school of Saiva philosophy.

The Saiva-Siddhanta

According to this system, there are three categories of

reality: God or the Lord, the self, and matter. The Lord, who is here called Siva, is the eternally self-existent and independent reality. The Lord is different in nature from the self which is conscious but dependent, and from matter which is unconscious. The Lord is an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient Being, because He is the first cause of the world, and the inmost self of all beings. The world being an ordered whole of parts is of the nature of an effect which must have been produced by a supremely intelligent and powerful Being. As the omniscient supreme ruler and moral governor of the world, He has full knowledge of all the elements in the constitution of the world and of all the activities in the history of living beings. The Lord is the eternal, free, and perfect spirit, with none of the impurities and imperfections which enter into the life of individual selves.

God, the Lord, is formless in Himself, but assumes various forms out of love for His devotees who find it impossible to worship Him as formless Being. He has no physical body made of bones and

flesh, but His body is made of conscious force and energy. He creates the world with this body of energy in accordance with the merits and demerits of individual souls. The Lord acts through His Sakti, which is personified conscious energy. In relation to the World, the Lord (Iiva) performs the functions of creation, preservation, and destruction, and in relation to selves He has the two functions of obscuring their intellects when they go astray and giving them His grace when they want to be liberated.

Selves are conscious agents, not transitory and finite or atomic entities as some philosophers suppose. Since they are not limited by time and space, selves are eternal and infinite. It is wrong to identify the self with the body or to say that there is only one self in all bodies, for there are as many selves as there are bodies. Consciousness and activity are intrinsic to the self, and it is divine since in liberation it has, like the Lord, eternal knowledge and infinite activity; its conscious and intelligent activities are a participation in the nature of the

divine. But because of the fetters of the material world, the self seems to lose its divinity and suffer in life in this world.

Matter constitutes the fetters of the self. It is unconscious and eternal like the *Sanjaya prakriti*, although its connection with any particular self is temporary. There are four kinds of matter: the *ignure*, the overpowering, force generated by actions, and *maya* or the cosmic energy. The first, *ignure* matter, conceals the self's infinity and activity and produces the false notions of its finiteness and inactivity. The second, overpowering energy, is the energy of *Siva Himself* which is a fetter of the self in so far as it obscures the self's intelligence. The third, *karma*, or the force generated by actions, is the stock of merit and demerit which arises out of the actions done by the self for personal ends and causes its rebirth into the world. *Maya* is the cosmic energy of the Divine which manifests the whole world at creation and withdraws it at dissolution. It is the material cause of the world.

The self is in bondage when it comes under the sway of matter, so far liberation it is necessary to break the fetters of matter. The means to liberation is spiritual initiation, and this depends on knowledge of reality, performance of religious duties, practice of yoga, and righteous conduct. But above all, it is the grace of Shiva that leads man to liberation. The liberated self becomes free from bondage of every kind and attains identity of essence with Shiva, being in possession of the Divine consciousness and the Divine will.

The Pratyabhijna System

The Pratyabhijna System is more explicitly monistic than the Saiva-Siddhanta. It looks upon God or the Supreme Lord, called Mahesvara, as the absolute reality which is both different and nondifferent from the world, and considers the individual self

to be really identical with the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord creates the world by His mere will and not through the aid of any unconscious material cause like prakriti. Creation is the Supreme Lord's manifestation of Himself to Himself, like a reflection of God in a mirror which also is God Himself. The individual self is none other than the Supreme Lord in so far the Supreme Lord has given His will to it, namely, His free will, His independence, and His absoluteness. Only in its ignorance as an embodied being of this world does the self forget its divine nature and complain of its weakness, smallness, and sinfulness.

God is the Supreme Self who is eternally free, self-manifest, and blissful in nature. He is both immanent and transcendent in relation to the world of many things and conscious beings. There is nothing to limit His absolute freedom, inexhaustible bliss, and universal manifestation; He is present in everything and is manifested everywhere in the universe. Eternal self-consciousness, infinite joy and activity belong to the essence of His being. The self of

man knows all things through its identity with the Supreme Self, for He is the only knower of the world. He manifests all things in and by the light of His eternal consciousness.

In reality, God is without plurality or difference, since He transcends all limitations of space and time, form and figure. His consciousness is of the nature of creative power and is eternally self-manifest. His activity consists in the free creation of the universe. It is the expression of the infinite delight which He is and wishes us to have. The Supreme Lord is also the highest good for man. A man who is rich in the wealth of devotion to God seeks nothing more; but he who is poor in this has nothing else to seek.

The individual self as a conscious and active principle is verily identical with the Supreme Lord. It has, like God, both consciousness and activity belonging to its essence. The identity of the soul with the Supreme Lord is established by the fact that

it has the capacity to know the whole universe and the freedom to do all acts, both of which are divine characteristics. But although the self is intrinsically free and divine, it becomes liable to limitation and bondage through maya or ignorance. In its ignorance the self thinks of itself as different from the Supreme Lord and of other things as different from itself. Hence the best way to deliver man from bondage is to make him recognize his identity with the Supreme Lord. It is the clear recognition (pratyabhijana) of his self as the same as the Supreme Being who is described as the highest Lord in the scriptures that leads man to liberation.

The liberated self no longer considers itself to be different from and opposed to other things and beings. He becomes one with, or rather finds himself as identical with, the whole universe. No strife troubles him, no jealousy demands him, and no conflict rends him. He lives in peace and unity with all. Being in possession of the highest good in human life, he does not hanker after worldly goods. With the realization of God, he realizes all ends, and acts

in the world with no other end in view than the good of mankind.

In the Protyletic System we find a type of religious thought which, although theistic on the face of it, is more properly characterized as supertheistic. Its central creed of the identity of the self with God and of God's difference and non-difference from the world takes it beyond the limits of a strictly theistic faith and brings it in line with the supertheistic schools which came next.

THEISTIC CONCEPT

There are some systems of Hindu religious thought which, although allied to theism, cannot be accurately called theistic. The essence of theism lies in the belief in a personal God who stands in a personal relation to man through ties of friendship

and love. Such a relationship requires that the persons related have a distinct reality and individuality of their own, and yet intercommunicate. If any of these marks be absent, we cannot speak of a personal relation between God and man, and consequently of theism.

Now in Hinduism there are certain religious systems in which God is conceived as both personal and impersonal and as either identical with man and the world or both identical with and different from them. Whether such a view is or is not justifiable is an open question, but that it is not theistic in the accepted sense of the word will have to be admitted. At the same time, these systems are neither opposed to nor subversive of theism. Rather, they represent a higher level of religious experience from which theism is found to be more rational than atheism. We may even say that in practical life they make a man more deeply religious than an ordinary theist. So we here propose to call them supertheistic.

THE MONISM OF SANKARA
(ADVAITA)

The monism of Sankara is based on his interpretation of the Vedanta. It is an absolutistic interpretation as distinguished from the later theistic interpretations of Madhva and Ramanuja. Advaita ("one ultimate," or "not-two") is the most popular system of faith and philosophy in India today and has been gaining ground in the West as well.

Brahman And The World

According to Sankara, Brahman is the Absolute Reality and there is no other reality but Brahman. Brahman is pure existence, consciousness, and bliss (sat-chit-ananda). These, however, are not His qualities or characteristics, but His essence.

He is pure existence-consciousness-bliss as one identical essence without any distinction or difference. Brahman is really devoid of all qualities and distinctions within Him or outside Him. Brahman does not really create any world. The world which we perceive is the product of Brahman's magical power called maya. Maya as a power of Brahman is indistinguishable from Brahman, just as the burning power of fire is from the fire itself. It is by this that Brahman, the Great Magician, conjures up the world show. The appearance of the world is taken as real by the ignorant, but the wise who can see through it find nothing but Brahman, the only reality behind this illusory show. So for the wise the world appearance is not real and Brahman is not the bearer of this illusion-producing power.

Advaita goes further and asserts that from the purely philosophical or transcendental standpoint, Brahman cannot be described at all and is, therefore, perfectly indeterminate or characterless. The description of Brahman even as existence-consciousness-bliss

cannot directly convey the idea of Brahman, for it only serves to direct the mind toward Brahman by denying of Him nonexistence, unconsciousness, and misery. Brahman in this transcendent aspect is called by Sankara, Paramahansa, the Supreme God or the Absolute.

But the Absolute may also be conceived from the ordinary practical standpoint as distinguished from the philosophical or the transcendental. From this standpoint the world is believed to be real and the Absolute is considered to be the creator, the sustainer, and the destroyer of the world and therefore as an omnipotent and omniscient being. The Absolute in this aspect is called Isvara by Sankara. He is the God of religion and the object of worship. This description of the Absolute as the creator of the world is true only so long as the world appearance is regarded as real, and it gives us not His essence but an accidental description of Him. Those who believe in the world show think of the Absolute through this show and call Him its creator, but for those wise few who know that the world is a mere show, there is neither

any real world nor any real creator, just as for the man who sees through the magician's trick there is neither any magic nor any magician.

The distinction between the higher and the lower aspect of Brahman helps us to understand how Brahman can be both in the world and beyond it, that is to say, both immanent and transcendent. The world, so long as it appears, is in Brahman, the only reality, just as the snake conjured out of the rope is nowhere else except in the rope. But Brahman is not affected by the imperfections of the world, just as the rope is not affected by any illusory characteristics of the snake.

Sankara's conception of the Absolute as Parmabrahma or perfectly indeterminate and attributeless Being differs from that of the God of religion who is possessed of the highest attributes and is an object of worship, but from this one should not think that it is antireligious or atheistic. If by God we mean the Supreme Reality,

then Sankara's view is certainly not atheism, but rather the perfection of the theistic faith. Whereas atheism believes only in the world and not at all in God, and ordinary theism believes in both the world and God, Sankara, as an absolute monist, believes only in the Absolute. For him, the Absolute is the only reality. Such a view makes the most of the Absolute and marks the highest extension of the religious emotion where love of Brahman becomes all-absorbing, suffering neither the ego nor the world. If this type of faith is to be distinguished from ordinary theistic belief in a personal God, we should call it supertheism, not atheism.

The Self And Its bondage And Liberation

Sankara believes in unqualified monism and rejects all distinctions between subjects and objects, the subject and the object, the self and Brahman as unreal and illusory. For him the self of man is really identical with Brahman. Man is apparently composed of the body, the mind, and the self. But the body and the mind are

like other material objects, merely appearances. When this is realized, the reality that remains is the self, which is nothing other than Brahman.

In the ordinary waking state a man thinks of himself as identical with the mind-body. When he sleeps and dreams he is conscious of objects as images which arise from memory impressions. He then appears as a limited subject or knower opposed to certain objects. In deep, dreamless sleep a man ceases to have any ideas of objects, and in the absence of objects he ceases to be a subject or knower as well. Even then his consciousness does not cease, for how otherwise could he remember at all on waking that he had such a state or that he had a sound sleep? There is, therefore, in the state of dreamless sleep pure consciousness free from the limitations of the body and the affections of the senses and the mind. Thus the self in its intrinsic nature is pure, blissful, and unlimited consciousness. As such, the self of man is identical with Brahman, who is pure consciousness and bliss.

Owing to ignorance, which is beginningless, the self erroneously associates and identifies itself with the body. This means bondage for the self. In this state it forgets that it is really divine and behaves like a finite, limited, and miserable creature. It thinks of itself as an isolated ego or individual opposed to other individuals, as having its own interests and purposes, which are in conflict with those of other selves. But the ego is not the real self of man; it is an apparent limitation of the self through its association with a particular body and mind. In truth, there is identity between a man's real self and Brahman and, therefore, between one self and other selves, since Brahman is present in them all.

Liberation from bondage is attained through the realization of the self's identity with Brahman. The identity is a real fact from the very beginning, only it has been forgotten for the time being and must be recognized. The means to liberation, according to Sankara, is the study of the Vedanta, under a teacher who has

himself realized Brahman. The performance of religious rites and duties or the study of Mimamsa is not essential for this study. What is indispensable, however, is fourfold culture of the mind, namely, discrimination between things eternal and things temporal, freedom from attachment to worldly objects, control of the senses and the mind, and an ardent desire for liberation.

With such training of the mind and body, one should begin to study the Vedanta with a competent teacher. The method of study consists in the threefold process of listening to the teacher's instructions, understanding the instructions through reasoning until all doubts are removed and conviction is generated, and constant meditation on the truths thus accepted. When all wrong beliefs thus become removed and belief in the truths of the Vedanta becomes steady and permanent, the pupil is told by the teacher, "Tat tvam asi" ("That art thou," or "Thou art Brahman"). One begins then to contemplate this truth steadfastly, until at last he has an immediate realization of the truth in the form, "I am Brahman." With

the false notion of distinction between the self and Brahman disappears and bondage goes along with it. Liberation (mukti or moksha) is thus attained.

It is possible for a man to live and act in the world even on the attainment of liberation. The body of the liberated self may continue for some time because it is the product of karmas which have already begun to bear their effects. But he never again identifies himself with the body and he is not deceived by the world which still appears before him. He has no desire for the world's objects and is, therefore, not affected by the world's misery. He is in the world and yet out of it. This conception of liberation is known as jivan-mukti, the liberation of one while he is alive. The liberated self is no longer swayed by the ordinary passions and impulses of life, he feels no urge for selfish actions meant to serve his personal ends. Renouncing all worldly desires, he lives in perfect peace and unity with the rest of the world and acts for the liberation of all souls who

are still in bondage. The life of the liberated man is a worthy ideal for all societies and communities.

Liberation is not merely the absence of all misery that arises from the illusory sense of distinction between the self and Brahman. It is a state of positive bliss, because Brahman is bliss and liberation is realization of identity with Brahman. The liberated self attains the life of divine, and lives and acts for the good of mankind.

THE NATURAL EV-LUTED HOMES OF HINDUISM (DVAIT-DVAITIM)

Madhva was a Vaishnava thinker who, in his interpretation of the Vedanta Sutra, attempted to synthesize dualistic Vaish (dvaita) with qualified monism (advaita). Thus he built up a system of religious thought which is known as dualistic monism.

(dvaitavatta, "dual-non-dual"). This religious-philosophical position has a limited number of followers in India in modern times, chiefly in northern India.

For Minbarke there are three categories of reality: the Supreme Self (Ishvara), the individual self (jiva), and the world (jagat). God, the Supreme Self, is both dual and non-dual, and both different and nondifferent from the individual self and the world. This character of the Supreme Self is natural and intrinsic to Him and it can be supported by reason. Hence this system is called natural or rational Dualistic Monism.

God(Ishvara), according to Minbarke, is the Supreme Self who by His very nature is both different and nondifferent from everything and is called Vasudeva or Krishna. He is the omniscient being in whom the past, present, and future of the world are eternally manifest and existent. As such, there is no room for any change in the Supreme Self, and no distinction of sub-

-ject, object, and process of knowledge in Him. In this aspect the Supreme Self is called attributeless and actionless Brahman. But the Supreme Self is also the omnipotent creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the world. Omnipotence is a natural and eternal character of the Supreme Self, therefore activity or power belongs to His essence and makes Him the Godhead. Apart from this power of creation, the Supreme Being would not be the Supreme Spirit.

The Supreme Being is both the material and the efficient cause of the world. The world of nature and selves is made up of finite parts of which the Supreme Being is the whole. It is the Supreme Being who manifests them by His will to be many and to have communion with the many. He is the universal and all-pervasive spirit who regulates all things of the world and controls all selves from within. He is the ground and support of all things and beings. The whole world and all selves live, move, and have their beings. In these aspects the Supreme Being is regarded as possessing infinite powers and infinite attributes. There is really no contradiction

between the qualified and the unqualified aspects of the Supreme Being, for as the subject of attributes He is different from and transcendent to them, and as the ground and support of the attributes He is also nondifferent from and immanent in them. He is thus both qualified and qualityless, different and nondifferent from the self and the world. The Supreme Self has four forms (such as Krishna) and appears as various incarnations under different conditions.

The world is unconscious, finite, limited, and imperfect; it is real and eternal and is included within the Supreme Being as a finite part. It exists as a subtle power of the Supreme Being before creation, is manifested by the Supreme Being during creation, and becomes unmanifest in the Supreme Being on dissolution, which means that it is never unreal or nonexistent. The world as an unconscious reality is of three kinds: the supernatural such as the abode of the Supreme Being, the natural which is the product of prakriti or primal matter, and the temporal. The world, which

is the manifestation of the objective and unconscious energy of the Supreme Being, is a real transformation and creation of the Supreme Being without in any way affecting His supreme perfection. The Supreme Being as the cause transcends the world which is an effect of His creative activity. He is also immanent in the world in so far as He is the material and efficient cause of the world and is thus manifested in it. The relation between the Supreme Being and the world is, therefore, one of difference and nondifference at the same time.

The individual selves are eternal, conscious, finite, infinitely small, and infinite in number. An individual self is of the essence of consciousness, and yet it is a knower or subject of consciousness, and active agent, and an enjoyer of pleasure and pain. The self is quite distinct from the body, the senses, and the mind. As a knower it is the ego or the "I" which knows, acts, and enjoys or suffers the consequences of its actions. It is an infinitesimal part of the Supreme Being and is completely dependent on Him. The

self resembles the Supreme Being in that its being is of the essence of consciousness; it is the finite manifestation of the Supreme Being's infinite, conscious energy. As such, it is not absolutely different from the Supreme Being, but while the Supreme Being is the infinite and all-pervading Self who controls everything else, the self is finite, limited, and controlled and guided by the Supreme Being. So far, it is different from the Supreme Being. Thus the relation between the Supreme Being and the self is one of simultaneous difference and nondifference.

Although the self is really an integral part of the Supreme Being and is essentially divine, in its ignorance it considers itself and the world (which is also a part of the Supreme Being) to be separate from and independent of Him. In consequence it gets entangled in the meshes of its selfish activities (karma). This means bondage for the self and leads to its repeated birth and death in this world with their inevitable sorrows and suffering. Deliverance from bondage is to come from the realization

that the Supreme Self is the Lord of all and the abode of all. The way to attain this realization is through deep devotion (bhakti) and complete resignation to the Supreme Being. As means thereof, the spiritual aspirant should perform the duties enjoined by the scriptures in a disinterested spirit. He should also meditate on the self and the world as the form and manifestation of the Supreme Being (Krishna), and constantly contemplate Him as the omnipotent, omniscient, and transcendent spirit. It is in this way that the self realizes its unity with the divine and becomes free from bondage and suffering.

THE CONVENTIONAL DUALISTIC SPIRIT OF CHAITANYA
(Achintya-Bheda-bheda)

Sri Chaitanya, the great Vaishnava reformer of Bengal, laid the foundations of a system of religious thought now known as a

system of dualistic monism which cannot be grasped by logical thought (achintya-bheda-bheda, "inconceivable duality and non-duality"). It has in modern times a fairly large following in upper India, especially Bengal. Other Vaishnava religious thinkers who followed Sri Chaitanya elaborated the system in contrast with the other schools of the Vedanta. It is closely allied to the Dvaitadvaita of Nimbarka, but has certain distinctive features of its own which we shall especially note here.

According to this system, there is one ultimate reality and that is Vishnu, the personal God of love and grace. God is the supreme, self-conscious, and absolute reality. He is the eternal consciousness and infinite bliss which Sri Krishna is. There is no independent thing similar or dissimilar to Him from which He can be distinguished, nor is there any distinction within Him. He is pure, self-manifest consciousness, possessed of the highest qualities and powers, but not devoid of attributes and activities. There are in Him three ultimate powers: the essen-

tial or internal power which is the energy of pure consciousness, the intermediate or self-creative power which is the subjective energy manifesting selves, and the external or world-creative power which is the objective energy creating the material world. God as possessor of such inconceivable powers exists eternally as He is in Himself and His celestial abode, and in the world of selves and the world of physical nature.

The divine consciousness crystallizes itself in the person of Sri Krishna, the Lord of all. The Advaita conception of Brahman as pure passive consciousness is imperfect, and the yogi's idea of the Supreme Self as completely detached from the world is incomplete. It is the Bhagavats conception of God Vishnu as the Supreme Person that is perfect and complete.

God's energy is both the material and the efficient cause of the world. The material world is a real world-creative creation of God, a real transmutation of God's world-creative energy. As aris-

-ing out of the divine will or energy, it cannot but be real, but since it is subject to change it is therefore impermanent — but it is never totally destroyed. At dissolution, it persists in God in an unmanifested subtle form and is consequently invisible.

The individual selves are conscious and atomic entities. They are real transformations of the self-creative energy of God and are integral parts of the divine being. As they are revelations of the divine energy which stands midway between God and the world, selves are higher than nature and can transcend it. They participate in the subjective consciousness of God, though not in the divine consciousness itself. The self has in it the power of self-determination, but in the exercise of this power it is conditioned by and dependent on God. The self is similar to God in its gifts of consciousness and self-determination, but in the exercise of this power it is conditioned by and dependent on God. The self is similar to God in its gifts of consciousness and self-determination, but being a finite, limited, and depend-

-ent part of God it is also different from Him. So the relation between God and the self, as also between God and the world, is one of difference as well as nondifference (bheda-bheda).

The same relation continues even in liberation, so the self never becomes identical with God. Just as the sun's rays are non-different from the sun in point of luminosity and also different from it in being but parts of the sun, so the selves are both different and nondifferent from God. Now God stands in such contradictory relations to the self and the world, we cannot understand by means of our thought and reason. It is something inconceivable by thought and incomprehensible by reason, but that God really has in Him such inconceivable powers we must believe on the authority of the scriptures.

Selves are of two classes, the liberated and the fettered. Those who turn toward and are always devoted to Him are liberated, and those whose minds are directed outward and are attached to the

world are in bondage. Liberation from bondage is attained primarily through devotion to God (bhakti). For this liberation one should always meditate on God, recite His name in company with great, religious souls, and enjoy the bliss that lies in the sacred name of his chosen deity. The outcome of all this is the fervent love of the Supreme Lord that breaks all the fetters of man and helps him attain the highest goal of human life, that is, the Lord Krishna.

THE HINDU SCHOOL OF VALLABHA
(Buddhadvaita)

Vallabha was a Brahman of southern India who migrated to the north during the fifteenth century A.D. He developed another Vaishnava school of the Vedanta, free from the belief that maya is an inscrutable power which conceals the reality of Brahman and projects the unreal appearance of a world of many

things and beings. According to him, the world of nature and individual selves (jivas) is not created by Brahman through any magical power like maya as was supposed by Sankara. Brahman in His pure being and as uncontaminated by anything - like maya - is manifested as the world or jivas and physical things. Hence the school of religious thought developed by Vallabha is called pure monism (suddhadvaita, pure nondualism).

Brahman is the absolute, independent reality. He is of the essence of existence (sat), consciousness (chit) and bliss (ananda) and has many good and great qualities. The Upanishadic texts which declare that He has no qualities mean only that He has not the ordinary human qualities. He is the highest being, who, when qualified by action only, is the presiding deity of sacrifices and is to be propitiated by ritualistic works. As qualified by wisdom, He is Brahman, and can be approached through philosophic knowledge as taught by the Upanishads. He requires no physical body for His activity. Yet He appears in physical forms to favour His devotees.

who love to see Him. As endowed with the qualities of wisdom and action, He is thus personified as Sri Krishna.

Brahman creates the world by His pure will, and not with the help of any second principle like maya, for that would contradict His absolute, independent existence. The creation of the world means just the manifestation of His being as the world of matter, time, and selves (prakriti, kala, and jivas). These are real and eternal existences as being but manifestations of the divine life and existence. The inanimate world and individual selves are natural emanations from Brahman, and are subtly of the same essence as Brahman, just as the rays of light emanating from the sun are essentially the same light as the sun.

Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of the world, since He is the substance which constitutes it and the energy or power of will which brings it into existence. He, however, does not undergo any change or transformation in mani-

-posting Himself as the world. There is a manifestation of His power or will in different degrees in the objects of the world, but no loss or mutation of His essential nature. The infinite in giving birth to the finite does not lose any part of His infinite essence or existence.

The material world with its living and nonliving objects is an emanation in which the existence aspect of Brahman is manifested and the consciousness and bliss aspects are suppressed. The world is, therefore, real and eternal. It has its being in Brahman and has no separate existence of its own. The world is in essence one with Brahman. Creation and destruction of the world mean only the manifestation and nonmanifestation of Brahman in the form of a system of many things and beings in space. The world being real is never completely annihilated. When destroyed, it is dissolved into Brahman and remains nonmanifest in Him.

Individual selves (jivas) are finite manifestations of Brahman.

In them the divine qualities of existence and consciousness are manifested, but that of bliss is suppressed. Jivas are infinitely small entities. They are atomic in size and are parts of Brahman. Being parts of the divine life, they are in essence one with Brahman and inseparable from Him. He is the whole of which they are the parts and they are partakers of His essence. As such, there is no real difference between Brahman and the individual self. The self is both an agent who acts and an enjoyer who reaps the consequences of his actions. Thought atomic, the self (jiva) pervades the whole body in which it exists, by its quality of consciousness, just as the fragrance of a piece of sandalwood fills the room in which it is.

The individual self is not differentiated from Brahman by the separative force of ignorance (avidya). The individual is really one with Brahman, with only the quality of bliss rendered unmanifest. There are three kinds of selves. First, there are the pure selves in whom the divine qualities are not obscured by the force

of ignorance. Second, there are the mundane selves who are entangled in the meshes of ignorance and pass through birth and death because of their false identification with the mind-body organism. Finally, we have the liberated selves in whom all ignorance has been destroyed by the knowledge of truth and for whom the bonds of worldly life have been broken.

Ignorance of the truth about Brahman, the world, and the self, is the cause of the individual's bondage to the world, that is, to the wheel of birth and death. While the individual selves and the inanimate world are really manifestations of Brahman and are in essence one with Him, it is sheer ignorance to think that there are so many independent realities. In his ignorance the individual thinks of himself as an independent being living in a world of independent things. He also thinks of himself as the body and the mind, and as subject to birth and death like them. While the world is real as a part of Brahman, it is unreal as an objective and independent system of many things and beings. It is ignorance of this

truth that constitutes man's bondage and is at the root of all the ills and evils from which he suffers in life in this world.

Devotion to Brahman in the sense of unshakeable and supreme love is the only means of emancipation from bondage. There is no other way to it. Of course, such devotion should be preceded by an insight into the truth and an understanding of His glory and greatness. But man cannot attain to such devotion by his unaided efforts. It is to be gained through the grace of the Supreme Being, which is received by those who are pure in heart. A firm faith in Brahman destroys all sins of man and renders him perfectly pure. Such a pure soul receives the grace of Brahman and, free from bondage, lives in His celestial abode in eternal loving service to Him.

THE SYNTHESIZING OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA (ISHWARA - VADA)

In the Bhagavad Gita we have a type of religious thought which may be said to be a monumental synthesis of the main trends of religiophilosophical thought in the epic period of Indian history. It gives us the quintessence of the Upanishadic philosophy as that is vitalized by the touch of the emotional and active elements of the religious life. The cold, colourless, and perfectly indeterminate absolute which we find in some Upanishadic texts becomes a living and loving God in the Bhagavad Gita, although His absoluteness is not altogether lost.

The dualism of spirit and matter (purusha and prakriti) which is almost inexplicable in the Upanishadic thought is happily ended in the Bhagavad Gita. The conflict of religions with their apparently exclusive views and ways of life finds reconciliation in its ca-

tholic spirit and comprehensive religious outlook. Although the interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita may vary, it is in modern times cherished all over India as one of the most widely read of the Hindu scriptures.

In the Bhagavad Gita God is regarded as the Supreme Self in whom there are two aspects, the transcendent and the immanent, the impersonal and the personal, or the unqualified and the qualified. The Supreme Self in His transcendent aspect is the infinite, indeterminate, unapproachable, and uncharacterizable absolute. He is the absolutely formless and attributeless Brahman of the Advaita Vedanta. In His immanent aspect the Supreme Self is a personal Being and is possessed of the highest attributes. He is manifested as the world of mutable things and immutable selves. But as combining these two aspects, the Supreme Self transcends the world of nature and of selves and stands higher than even the immutable Brahman.

If we keep in view these two aspects of the Supreme Self, we shall be in a better position to understand the apparently conflicting statements regarding His nature found in the Upanishads. The Supreme Self is the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the world. He creates the world out of Himself, not out of nothing. He has a lower nature which is manifested as the material world including mind, intellect, and the ego. He has a higher nature which constitutes the world of individual selves. The Supreme Self is thus the origin and end of the whole universe. Higher than the Supreme Self there is nothing.

All things and beings are centered in the Supreme Self like beads on a string. He pervades the whole world and is in the heart of all beings as their inner ruler and guide. He is the moral governor of the world and the dispenser of the fruits of our actions. He is also the final resting ground, guide, friend, and saviour of the world. The world is but the manifest form of the Supreme Self. Everything great and glorious in the universe is a special mani-
fes-

-tation of the Supreme Self. The Supreme Self also incarnates Himself in the world and shares the joys and sorrows of men in the fullness of His self-communicative love and sportive, playful activity (lila).

Although the Supreme Self is and does all these things in one aspect of Him, yet from another He is none of these things and does nothing. He is the eternal, immutable, and transcendent reality in which there is no change, mutation, or activity. He neither acts nor induces other selves to act and enjoy or suffer the consequences of their actions. He is above the whole world of matter (prakriti) with its qualities of sattva, rajas, and tamas, which overpower other selves and blind their vision. It is the ignorant who think of the one, absolute reality as changed into the many and the mundane. Although He pervades the world and everything is in Him, yet He transcends them all and there is nothing in Him. Such is the mystery of the Divine life that

it supports and sustains all beings and yet is not in them, just as the mighty air moves in the all-pervading space and yet leaves it unaffected.

The world of nature exists as a part of the Supreme Self and is dependent on and controlled by Him. It is constituted by the lower nature of the Supreme Self which consists of the eight elements of earth, water, fire, air, ether or space, mind, intellect, and ego. It is vitalized and sustained by the Supreme Self's higher nature, which is manifested in individual selves (jivas). The world is evolved by these two aspects of God's nature, selves and matter.

The order of evolution is such the same as in the Gokhyo, but here self (parashu) and matter (prakriti) are but parts of the Supreme Self, not independent and ultimate principles. The Supreme Self is the inspiring Spirit who infuses life and light into the womb of nature (prakriti). He is the Father and nature is the mother of the world. As such, the world is neither the mechanical

product of matter nor the illusory projection of maya or magical power. It is a real and rational creation by the Supreme Self's natural and intelligent powers.

Individual selves (jivas) are conscious, eternal, and infinite realities. They are the expressions of the higher conscious nature of the Supreme Self and form integral parts of the Divine life. They are not subject to birth and death, change and mutation, disintegration and destruction. They are above space, time, and causality, and are quite distinct from the mind, the senses, and the body. Just as a man casts off a worn-out garment and puts on a new one, so the self passes from a decaying body and enters into a growing one. Birth and death are but different stages in the life of the self, just as boyhood, youth, and old age are stages in the life of a man.

The self is really divine and transcends the whole of nature. It is the Supreme Self who is present in man's body as the witness.

-ing and unmoving self. The self is not the limited ego in us which performs various acts and enjoys or suffers the consequences thereof. All activity belongs to nature or prakriti. It is only when the self is deluded by and identified with the ego that it thinks itself to be an agent, a doer, a sufferer, or an enjoyer. This means bondage and a consequent life of suffering for the self in this world. The self that is in bondage is liable to sin and suffering, birth and death.

Liberation from bondage is the highest end of the individual self. Liberation is attained through self-realization, that is, realization of the self as essentially pure and divine, as distinct from nature and her qualities, the three gunas. It is the realization of the Supreme Self as well, for the Supreme Self is the self in us. As regards to the realization of the Self, or God, the Bhagavad Gita recommends the four paths of meditation, knowledge, action, and devotion.

Meditation is the way of self-realization through deep concentration of attention, steadied like an unflickering flame, on the self. The preparations necessary for this are purification of the body, regulation of life and its habits, control of mind and the senses, continence, and detachment. With such preparation one is to meditate on the self in a quiet and secluded place and with a determined will. Such calm and continued meditation leads to a clear realization of the self as a transphysical and supermental reality.

Knowledge as a way of self-realization consists in the direct experience of the Supreme Self as the ultimate reality and of the self as essentially identical with the Supreme Self. It requires faith in the Supreme Self, devotion to truth, and self-control to acquire a direct knowledge of ultimate reality. It requires also an inquisitive mind, a devotion and service to a teacher who has himself realized the Supreme Self. With the proper training of one's intellect, emotion, and will, one is to re-

-ceive instructions from the wise and enlightened teacher. By constant reflection and continued meditation on the truths thus received one realizes that the Supreme Self is the self in us and beyond us, that He creates the world by His free will, and that He incarnates Himself out of love for man. With this realization, one finds himself in the Supreme Self and the same Supreme Self in all beings from the highest to the lowest. He lives in perfect peace with all other beings, finds in him the likeness that the Supreme Self is, and devotes himself to the service of humanity as the manifestation of divinity. Thus the Jita does not approve of inactivity even on the part of those who are liberated.

Action as a method of self-realization consists in the disinterested performance of one's own duties according to one's station in life. One should do the duties assigned to him by his nature and his social status, but he should not act with any selfish motive of gain to himself. Rather, he should offer the fruits of his actions to the Supreme Self and do them in the spirit of service to

the Supreme Self. He should also be free from the sense of egoism in relation to these actions. All actions, he should know, are due not to the self, but to nature (prakṛiti). His self is the standing witness of all activities, but not the body, nor the mind, nor the ego concerned in them. The disinterested performance of one's duties thus enables one to realize the self as the free, transcendent spirit.

Devotion to the Supreme Self (bhakti) is a comparatively easy method of self-realization. It is open to all, high and low, educated and illiterate. It consists in sincere love of the Supreme Self and devoted service to Him. Here we are just to give up all pride, shed all fears, and forget all restraint or reluctance to approach the Supreme Self and take shelter in Him as the highest Lord. We are constantly to remember Him, meditate on Him, and serve and worship Him. One who is thus devoted to the Supreme Self, heart and soul, and is resigned to Him in all humility and

weakness, receives His grace and overcomes the lure of the world of sense or nature. The Supreme Self gives him that enlightenment of the intellect by which he realises the Divine and enjoys the bliss of communion with Him.

These are the broad paths to liberation as laid down in the Bhagavad Gita. They are not exclusive but interrelated, and all of them lead to the same goal of liberation. We may follow one or the other according to our taste, temperament, and character, and reach the same goal, which is the Supreme Self. The Gita leaves us in no doubt that the Supreme Self hears our prayer in whatever language we may use it, He accepts our worship in whatever form we may offer it, and comes within our sight in whatever direction we may seek light. The synthetic outlook and catholic spirit of Hinduism are seen at their best in the religion of the Bhagavad Gita.

THE HINDU SCRIPTURES OF TANTRA
(SAMI - VADA)

The Tantras are reckoned among the ancient scriptures of the Hindus and are sometimes given a place of importance equal to that of the Vedas. They are written in the form of a discussion between Shiva and His spouse Parvati — the two fundamental principles of their philosophy. Some scholars trace their origin to the Vedas, while others trust that as independent of the Vedas and even as superior to them. The Tantras are mainly concerned with the practical side of religion, that is, religious practices and observances, as they are sometimes known as the Sakta Agamas, the manuals of the worship of Sakti — the Divine Mother or the Supreme Goddess. But there is also a theory or philosophy in them which is very high and high, although at present it is well-nigh forgotten.

The religious thought of the Tantra is another instance of a synthetic religious philosophy which tries to reconcile different religions and different philosophies. For it, there is really no antagonism between the monism of Advaita Vedanta and the dualism of Dvaita Vedanta. The latter is the steppingstone to the former, for the monistic truth is to be reached through the dualistic world. Thus it harmonizes Advaita with Dvaita Vedanta. Its sole purpose is to give liberation to the individual self by a method in which monistic truth is reached through the world of duality. The Tantra also helps to make up the quarrel between different religious sects by its solemn declaration that different sects worship only different forms of the one Supreme God.

The Supreme God is conceived in the Tantra as one, universal spiritual power (sakti) and is called the Divine Mother (Devi). The Divine Mother is variously named as Kali, Tara, Durga, Chandika, and so on. Of Her own free will and for the purpose of creation She divided Herself into the dual aspects of male and female. Of

these, Shiva is the male principle and the supreme cosmic consciousness (purusha) and Shakti is the female principle and the supreme primordial energy (prakriti). Shiva and Shakti again are each divided according to whether they are with or without attributes. The supreme attributeless Shakti is full of luster; so also is the supreme attributeless Shiva. As attributeless self-shining Shakti She is of the essence of Brahman and is above the world of maya or of objects. In Her state with attributes, She gives birth to Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Mahesvara the destroyer of the world. It is with this attribute of maya that She gives birth to the three worlds, consisting of moving and unmoving things.

This creative power of the Divine Mother has as its substance the three gunas of sattva (balance or wisdom), rajas (activity or restlessness), and tamas (inertia or dullness), and it constitutes the vast and variegated world of objects. Again, with Her conscious energy She appears in the world as individual

and embodied selves (jivas). Although the cosmic consciousness and primordial energy are in their real nature free from attachment, as embodied selves they are under the influence of the Divine Mother who charms the world and the selves. Hence it is that the jivas perform the vast world play and remain absorbed in it.

The Divine Mother pervades the whole world, giving birth to all things from the highest to the lowest and manifesting Her majesty both as mind and as matter. That is the way in which She plays the cosmic game. Mind and matter are not two diametrically opposed substances, of which one is conscious and the other is unconscious; rather, they are the forms in which the same divine energy figures in its playful cosmic activity. As such, they are held like two children in the embrace of the same Mother.

Shiva and Shakti, the supreme male and female principles, are inseparably connected. One does not exist independent of the other.

United with Shakti, the cosmic consciousness becomes Shiva; and united with Shiva, the supreme primordial energy becomes Shakti. Apart from Shakti, the supreme self is a corpse; and apart from Shiva, the supreme primordial energy is blind force. Shiva and Shakti thus inseparably connected and covered up by maya are called the Supreme Self by the Yogi and the Supreme God by the Vedantin. Brahman is not actionless and attributeless pure consciousness; it is, rather, the supreme, spiritual power which is both moving and motionless, both with and without attributes. In short, the Divine Mother with Her two inseparable aspects of Shiva and Shakti, of motionlessness and motion, is the true Supreme God (Parabrahma).

The world of material things and living beings is the manifestation of the energy of the Supreme God, that is, the Divine Mother. It reveals the wealth of the Shakti or omnipotence of the Mother of the universe. The whole universe is but the reflection of the Mother in the horizon of maya. It is as if the Divine Mother sees Her own face in the mirror of maya and plays with Her child-

-rom the great cosmic game. The world is thus in its own way as real as the Supreme God whose play, or lila, it is. There is no other reason for the appearance of a world of things and beings out of the Supreme God than the free, sportive, playful will of the Supreme God. It pleases the Mother to create a world only for the joy of creation, just as it pleases a man to play a game only for the sake of enjoyment. Again, just as the player in the joy of play takes assumed things and conditions as real, but has no real connection with them, so the Divine Mother plays the worldly game but has no real connection with it.

The substance of the world is *Siva* and *Ishti*, that is, the cosmic consciousness (*purusha*) and cosmic energy (*prakriti*). Out of the union between the two arises every thing and being of the world. The drama of the world is the play of the one on the back of the other. It has neither a beginning nor an end. In concrete imagery, it is the eternal dance of *Ishti*, the cosmic energy, on the breast of *Siva*, the cosmic consciousness. It is not, as some peo-

-ple thought, the dance of blind atoms in empty space.

Individual selves (jivas) are created by that power of the Divine Mother in which the element of rajas predominates; they are preserved by that in which sattva predominates; and they are destroyed by that in which tamas predominates. The jivas have no independence in the matter of either their creation or dissolution for these are due to the force of the will of the Divine Mother, who creates and destroys the world by Her will. The jivas cannot change the physical order of the world which proceeds from the will of the Divine Mother nor can they afford to ignore the world in their present state because, if they are to know the Mother of the Universe, they must know Her through the display of Her power in the world.

Individual selves are thus the children of the Divine Mother, and live, move, and have their being in Her; but under the spell of the Divine Maya, they forget their Mother and live in

separation from Her. With this they come under bondage to the world and live a life of sin and misery. Deliverance from bondage is to be attained through knowledge of Shakti as the Supreme Deity and the Mother of the three worlds. But it is sheer folly to think that the truth about the Divine Mother can be known by mere logical reasoning or metaphysical thinking. To know this truth one must go through a long course of spiritual training (sadhana) extending over many lives. Customs, principles, rules and regulations, spiritual practices, worship, mantras and tantra are all required in order to know the truth about the Divine Mother. One must also place one's self under the guidance of a qualified spiritual preceptor (guru) for attaining success in spiritual life. Above all, one should be resigned to the will of the Divine Mother and receive Her grace.

Such success in the spiritual life means the realization of the Divine Mother as the spiritual power (shakti) which pervades every thing and every being, every atom and molecule of the universe.

-verse. One who realizes this supreme truth is no longer bound by ways to mundane life. He lives and moves in the world, and yet remains unspoiled in the end of worldly actions. The same Divine Mother who once caused his bondage now liberated him and stands before him as the Divine Mother with hers as her great power. Free from all lust and greed, fear and dread, craving and caprice, he lives forever in peace and bliss. To rise in the state of bondage was a mere jiva attains in liberation the status of Jiva -- the Great Self.

This brief survey of Hindu religious thought shows the catholic and comprehensive spirit of Hinduism as a religion. Instead of forcing all religious souls to move through the same religious groove, Hinduism as a religion lays down different paths for different men, according to their different abilities and aptitudes. At the same time, it recognizes the essential unity of different religions as being but so many approaches to

the same goal, freedom from sin and misery. As such, Hinduism may with some justification be called a universal religion.

